

Higher Essay outlines

The Rise of Hitler and the Nazis, 1918-1933

The question usually asks for an assessment of the importance of one of the reasons for the rise of Hitler and the Nazis:

How important was factor X as a reason for the rise of Hitler & the Nazis?

You have to consider the relative importance of all the main reasons for the rise of Hitler & the Nazis with particular attention (especially in your introduction & conclusion) to the reason mentioned in the question.

Occasionally the question is about the reasons for the collapse of the Weimar Republic:

How important was factor X as a reason for the collapse of the Weimar Republic?

The reasons for the collapse of Weimar are similar to the reasons for the rise of the Nazis. Again you have to consider the relative importance of all the main reasons for the collapse of Weimar with particular attention (especially in your introduction & conclusion) to the reason mentioned in the question.

A. HOW IMPORTANT WAS FACTOR X IN THE RISE OF HITLER & THE NAZIS?

(A comparison of the relative importance of all the main reasons for the rise of the Nazis with particular attention to factor X)

Introduction

- In 1923 Hitler's attempt to seize power failed miserably
- Just 10 years later in 1933 Hitler & the Nazis came to power
- Historians have debated ever since over the main reasons for this
- Factor X played a role by . . . (very briefly explain)
- But there were other factors – weaknesses of Weimar, Treaty of Versailles, economic problems, fear of Communism, Nazi propaganda, Hitler's abilities, mistakes of Nazis' opponents.

Weaknesses of Weimar

- Weimar governments blamed for defeat in war
- Threatened from right (Nationalists & Nazis) & left (Communists)
- Not much popular support for Weimar government
- Series of unstable coalition governments
- Constitutional weaknesses – electoral system & powers of President
- Hitler & Nazis played on these weaknesses

Treaty of Versailles

- Resentment at War Guilt, German territorial losses, disarmament, reparations, dictated peace (very brief explanation)
- Hitler & Nazis promised to get rid of Versailles

Economic problems

- 1923 hyper-inflation caused by war debt, reparations & occupation of Ruhr by France & Belgium
- Middle-class savings wiped out (but Hitler's bid for power fails)
- Dawes Plan solves immediate problem - but support for Weimar further undermined & Germany over-reliant on US loans
- Relatively little support for Nazis 1923-28
- 1929-32 world economic crisis hits Germany badly – 6m. unemployed
- Nazi support increases dramatically in 1930 election

Fear of communism

- Economic crisis increases support for communism in working class
- Upper & middle classes view communism as a serious threat to their property, wealth and power
- Hitler & Nazis promise to smash communism

Nazi propaganda

- Skilful propaganda – Goebbels, American advertising & the Big Lie
- Directed at specific groups – industrialists, middle class, professions, farmers, workers – sometimes contradictory promises
- Drama & spectacle – rallies, marches - carefully orchestrated
- Anti-semitism appealed to some Germans – Jews as scapegoats

Hitler's abilities

- Very effective speaker – rabble-rouser – played on feelings of crowd
- Sharp political judgement – e.g. after 1923 switched from revolutionary to constitutional methods - prepared to take risks/gamble
- Cult of the Fuhrer (Leader) deliberately built up round him
- Hitler himself much more popular than the Nazi Party

Mistakes of Nazis' opponents

- Left-wing (Socialists & Communists) fighting each other and failed to unite against Nazis
- Right-wing (Nationalists & others) thought they could use Hitler - von Papen persuaded Hindenberg to appoint Hitler Chancellor
- Hitler ending up using them to get into power

Conclusion

- All above factors played a role in helping Hitler to power
- Factor X is (one of) more/less important factors because
- Without economic crisis Hitler would not have been presented with opportunity to take power - 'put wind into Hitler's sails' (A.J.P.Taylor)
- But without e.g. Nazi propaganda, Hitler's abilities, opponents' mistakes - Nazis would not have been able to take power when the opportunity arose.